Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. **(currently amended)** A method of assigning importance classes to electronic messages, the method comprising:

    (a)   identifying ~~the~~ a sender of an electronic message;

    (b)   identifying ~~the~~ a recipient of the electronic message;

    (c)   determining a relative organizational distance between the sender and the recipient; and

    (d)   assigning the electronic message an importance class as a function of the relative organizational distance between the sender and the recipient;

characterized in that:

    (e)   said function <u>assigns the importance class in inverse dependence on the relative organizational distance between the sender and the recipient.</u>~~is independent of which of the sender or the recipient is of higher rank.~~

2. **(previously presented)** The method according to claim 1, wherein said function is further weighted by at least one additional criterion, selected from the following:

    (a)   a globally defined content criterion;

(b)   a personally defined message sender criterion;

(c)   a personally defined content criterion;

(d)   a plurality of rules formed by a machine-learning algorithm or algorithms.

(e)   an analysis of e-mail message headers.

3. (previously presented) The method according to claim 2, wherein the at least one additional criterion is a function of content in the message subject field and/or in the message body.

4. (currently amended)   The method according to claim 2 ~~or 3~~, wherein assigning the electronic message an importance class includes analyzing actions taken by said recipient on receipt of said messages so as to establish a relative importance ascribed by the recipient to received messages.

5. (currently amended)   The method according to ~~any one of claims ff1 to f4~~claim 1, wherein said electronic message is an electronic mail (e-mail) message.

6. (currently amended)   The method according to ~~any one of claims ff1 to f4~~claim 1, wherein said electronic message is a facsimile message.

7. (currently amended)   The method according to ~~any one of claims ff1 to f4~~claim 1, wherein said electronic message is a converted voice message or pager message text data.

8. (currently amended)   The method according to ~~any one of claims ff1 to f7~~claim 1, wherein the relative organizational distance between the sender and the recipient is determined from an organizational structure of a corporation and

said function is refined according to one or more of the following:

(a)   a set of global control rules according to the organizational structure and the work affiliation among different departments and different hierarchical layers in the corporation establishing organizational distance as a function of distance between respective hierarchical layers of the sender and recipient and of distance between departments in a common hierarchical layer;

(b)   a set of control rules according to ad hoc work groups formed from time to time;

(c)   a global list of preferred originating addresses, external to the organization, from senders affiliated with the organization.

9. **(currently amended)**   A method for streamlining the management of electronic messages, the method comprising:

(a)   assigning an importance class to each of said messages in inverse dependence on a relative organizational distance between a sender and recipient of the message.according to the method of any one of claims ¶¶1 to ¶8; and

(b)   streamlining said messages in a pre-determined manner in accordance with the respective importance class of each message.

10. **(previously presented)**   The method for streamlining the management of electronic messages according to claim 9, wherein streamlining the messages includes displaying notifications of incoming messages in a color that is characteristic of the respective importance class of each message.

11. (previously presented) The method for streamlining the management of electronic messages according to claim 9, wherein streamlining the messages includes displaying in association with notifications of incoming messages a distinctive tag that is characteristic of the respective importance class of each message.

12. (previously presented) The method for streamlining the management of electronic messages according to claim 9, wherein streamlining the messages includes sorting notifications of incoming messages in a pre-determined order, indicating the relative importance of said messages in respect with their assigned importance classes.

13. (currently amended) The method for streamlining the management of electronic messages according to ~~any one of claims ff9 to f12~~claim 9, wherein streamlining the messages includes blocking messages whose importance class is beneath a predetermined threshold.

14. (previously presented) The method according to claim 13, further including alerting the sender that a message has been blocked.

15. (currently amended) The method according to ~~any one of the preceding claims~~ claim 9 being implemented on a copy of the message that is external to a central repository on which incoming messages are stored so as to enable uninterrupted service in the case that said method fails to operate or malfunctions.

16. (currently amended) The method according to ~~any one of the preceding claims~~ claim 9 including selectively

transmitting e-mail messages from an e-mail server's inbox to a client computer's inbox, according to said importance class.

17. (currently amended) The method according to ~~any one of the preceding claims~~claim 9, further including grouping messages residing in a user's inbox into archives, according to their importance class and an elapsed time since they were received.

18. (currently amended) The method according to ~~any one of claims f1 to f17~~claim 1, including using a graphical tool to define the organizational distance between different entities within the organization.

19. (currently amended) A system for assigning importance classes to electronic messages, said system comprising:

a message data extraction unit for identifying a sender and a recipient of an electronic message; and

a classifier coupled to the message data extraction unit and being responsive to a relative organizational distance between the sender and the recipient for assigning an importance class to the electronic message <u>in inverse dependence on the relative organizational distance between the sender and the recipient</u>~~regardless of whether the sender or the recipient is of higher rank~~.

20. (previously presented) The system according to claim 19, wherein the classifier is further adapted to assigning said importance class based on at least one additional criterion, selected from the following:

    (a)   a pre-defined message sender criterion;

    (b)   a pre-defined content criterion;

(c)   a plurality of rules formed by a machine-learning
        algorithm tracing user actions;

(d)   an analysis of e-mail message headers.

    21. (currently amended)   The system according to
claim 19 ~~or [20~~, further including a rules formation unit
comprising:

(a)   a set of global control rules relating to an
        organizational structure and work affiliation among
        different departments and different hierarchical layers
        thereof;

(b)   a set of control rules relating to ad hoc work
        groups formed from time to time in said organizational
        structure; and

(c)   a global list of preferred originating addresses
        external to the organizational structure.

    22. (canceled)

    23. (canceled)

    24. (New) A program storage device readable by
machine, tangibly embodying a program of instructions executable
by the machine to perform a method for assigning importance
classes to electronic messages, the method comprising:

(a)   identifying the sender of an electronic message;

(b)   identifying the recipient of the electronic
message;

(c)   determining a relative organizational distance
        between the sender and the recipient; and

(d)   assigning the electronic message an importance
        class as a function of the relative organizational
        distance between the sender and the recipient in
        inverse dependence on the relative organizational

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distance between the sender and the recipient.

25. (New) A computer program product comprising a computer useable medium having computer readable program code embodied therein of assigning importance classes to electronic messages, the computer program product comprising:

computer readable program code for causing the computer to identify a sender of an electronic message;

computer readable program code for causing the computer to identify a recipient of the electronic message;

computer readable program code for causing the computer to determine a relative organizational distance between the sender and the recipient; and

computer readable program code for causing the computer to assign the electronic message an importance class as a function of the relative organizational distance between the sender and the recipient in inverse dependence on the relative organizational distance between the sender and the recipient.